SANDMAN 15
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THE SANDMAN

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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

the DOLL'S HOUSE part 6

GAIMAN • DRINGENBERG • JONES

INTO THE NIGHT

824

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THANKS TO SAM KIETH

HI, HONEY. SO THEY FINALLY THREW YOU OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, HUH?

HOW *IS* HE?

NO CHANGE.

STILL OUT COLD. CONCUSSION. AND HE'S VERY DEHYDRATED. THEY'VE GOT HIM ON ONE OF THOSE THINGS. Y'KNOW.

DRIPS.

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

GEE--THAT MUST BE--

...ROUGH. KEN AND I REALLY--

... DON'T LIKE HOSPITALS, DO WE, BARBIE?

NO INDEEDY.

NO.

NO, I DON'T LIKE HOSPITALS MUCH EITHER.

HELLO, HOUSEMATE. ZELDA AND MYSELF INTENTIONALLY DELAYED OUR BED-TIME, IN ORDER TO BID YOU TO BEAR UP TO YOUR CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH FORTITUDE AND HOPE.

ZELDA HAS A REASSURING MORAL HOMILY CONCERNING GOD, DIFFICULT TIMES, AND A VARIABLE NUMBER OF FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND.

SHE TOLD IT TO ME ONCE, AND IT CHEERED ME UP RE-MARKABLY.

THAT'S NICE. I...

I'LL HEAR IT LATER. *PLEASE.* IF YOU DON'T MIND. THANK YOU, CHANTAL.

THANK YOU, ZELDA.

I THINK WE ALL NEED SOME SLEEP. ESPECIALLY YOU.

HERE, ROSEBUD. I MADE YOU SOME HERB TEA.

DRINK IT DOWN, THEN GO TO BED.

GOOD NIGHT, ROSE WALKER.

NIGHT-NIGHT--

,,SLEEP TIGHT.

YEAH, G'NIGHT GUYS.

I'M SORRY, HAL. IT'S JUST I WISH *MOM* COULD BE OUT HERE.

I SIT THERE BY JED'S BED, WAITING FOR HIM TO COME ROUND... *WONDERING* WHAT KIND OF *SHAPE* HE'LL BE IN WHEN HE *DOES*...

BUT MOM HAS TO STAY ON IN ENGLAND, LOOKING AFTER UNITY.

I DON'T *UNDERSTAND* IT. *WHY* DO THEY BOTH HAVE TO BE SICK AT THE SAME TIME?

IT SHOULDN'T BE *ME* OUT HERE. IT OUGHTTA BE MOM.

G'NIGHT, HAL.

NIGHT, HONEY.

I FELT *SO* MUCH OLDER THAN I DID WHEN I ARRIVED HERE.

IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS I'D FOUND AN UNKNOWN GRANDMOTHER AND A LONG-LOST BROTHER.

NOW IT LOOKED LIKE I MIGHT LOSE BOTH OF THEM.

GO TO SLEEP, ROSE.

I *CAN'T.*

I'M TOO WORRIED.

AND I'M *SO* TIRED.

SO TIRED...

I WISH I COULD *SLEEP.*

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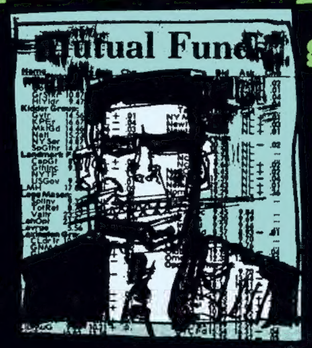

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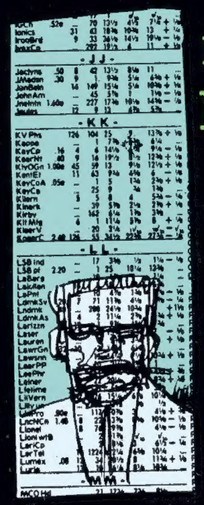

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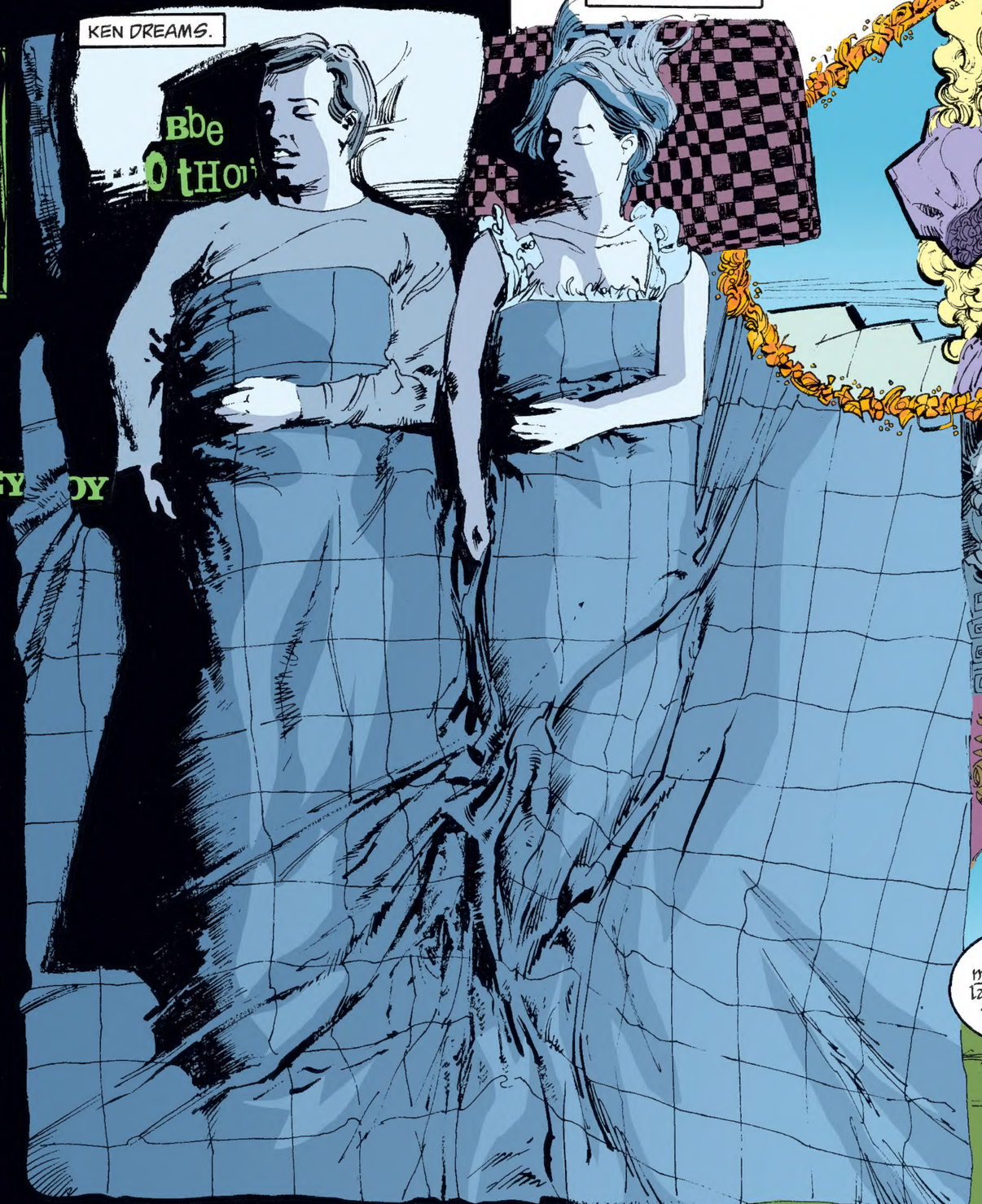

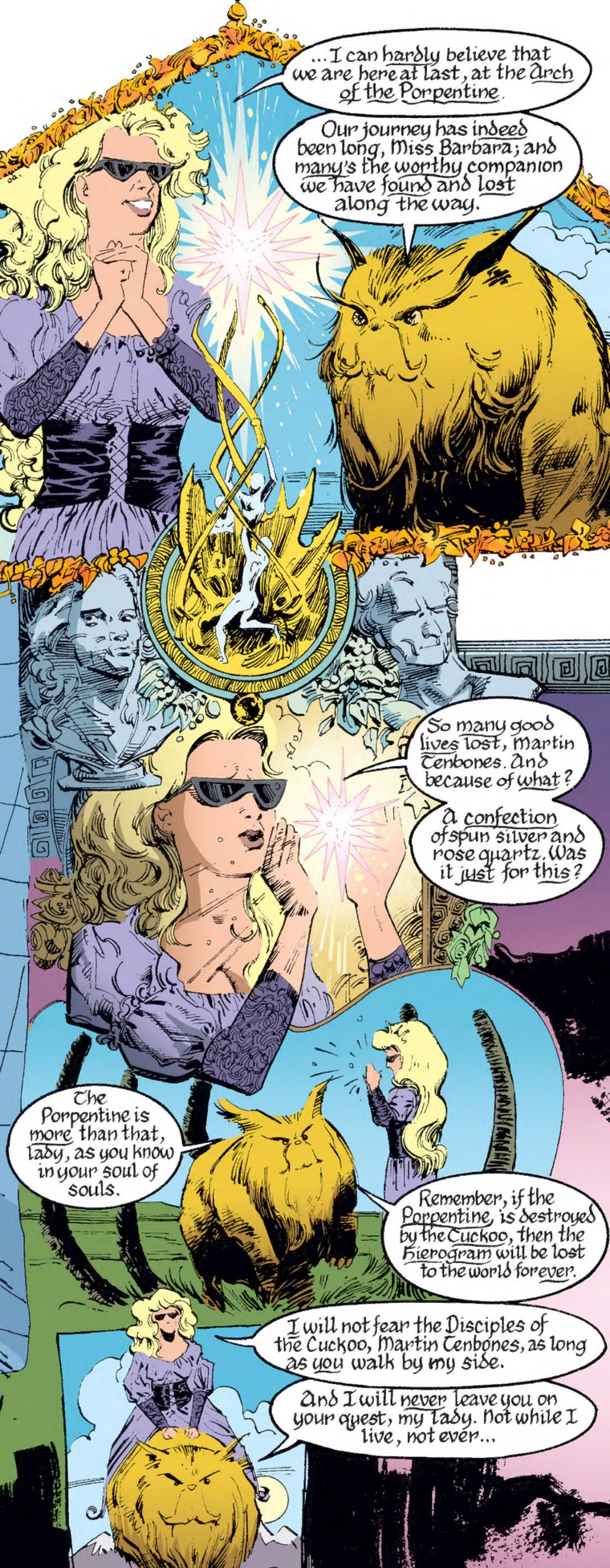
...I can hardly believe that we are here at last, at the Arch of the Porpentine.
Our journey has indeed been long, Miss Barbara; and many's the worthy companion we have found and lost along the way.
So many good lives lost, Martin Tenbones. And because of what?
A confection of spun silver and rose quartz. Was it just for this?
The Porpentine is more than that, Lady, as you know in your soul of souls.
Remember, if the Porpentine is destroyed by the Cuckoo, then the Hierogram will be lost to the world forever.
I will not fear the Disciples of the Cuckoo, Martin Tenbones, as long as you walk by my side.
And I will never leave you on your quest, my Lady. Not while I live, not ever...

CHANTAL DREAMS.

CHANTAL IS HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH A SENTENCE. JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS A CHANCE MEETING THAT GREW INTO SOMETHING IMPORTANT FOR BOTH OF THEM

They like the same things. She took it to a party. They were a big hit. The perfect couple.

Everybody knows about her and the sentence.

CHANTAL AND ZELDA SLEEPING

The sentence spent most of last year in Czechoslovakian for political reasons.

But it was recently translated back into English.

In order to stop the sentence being deported, Chantal has arranged to have it read into the Library of Congress.

However--

...when the time comes she discovers that she can no longer read.

She has no idea what her sentence is about.

Despondent and joyless, Chantal begins to cry.

ZELDA DREAMS.

MOMMY AND DADDY TOLD ME TO GO AWAY SO HERE I AM IN THE OLD BONE ORCHARD NOBODY UNDERSTANDS ME NOBODY CARES NOBODY ELSE UNDERSTANDS IT THE BEAUTY OF THE LOST NECROPOLIS THE CHARNEL CHARM

OH BUT CHANTAL COMES ALONG AND SHOWS ME SHE'S MY SOUL SISTER ME AND HER TRUE GOTHIC HEROINES SECRET BRIDES OF THE FACELESS SLAVES OF THE FORBIDDEN HOUSE OF THE NAMELESS NIGHT OF THE CASTLE OF DREAD DESIRE

WITH MELMOTH WE WALK THE CORRIDORS OF OTRANTO

AND CHANTAL SAYS I'M GOING TO TAKE OFF MY VEIL ZELDA AND OH GOD I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE MY MOM SAYING OH GOD ZEE YOU'RE SICK LISTEN ROBERT DO YOU KNOW WHAT I FOUND IN HER ROOM YOUR DAUGHTER'S DISGUSTING

THAT'S US

AND I'LL JUST START STAMMERING AND SHE'LL MAKE FUN OF ME HEY LI'L MORON D'YOU BELIEVE IN GODZILLA

LET IT BE CHANTAL NOT MY MOM NOT MY MOM PLEASE GOD PLEASE GOD

THANK YOU GOD. OH THANK YOU.

NOW THE LITTLE GIRL ZELDA STARTS LAUGHING

THE LITTLE GIRL LAUGHS AND LAUGHS...

HAL DREAMS.

HAL DREAMS OF BETTE, AND JUDY, AND MARILYN. THEY'VE COME TO TELL HIM THE BIG SECRET.

HE'S ALWAYS SUSPECTED THERE WAS A BIG SECRET...

OKAY, DOLL, LISTEN CAREFULLY. WE'RE ***ONLY*** GONNA SAY THIS ***ONCE***...

HHHNN.

LOST IT. SOME DREAM. A GOOD DREAM.

WOKE UP. SORT OF.

RETREAT BACK INTO WARM BACK INTO COMFORT BACK INTO (WHAT? WHAT WAS IN THE DREAM? JUDY GARLAND...?)

OF COURSE, THIS ISN'T MY ***REAL*** FACE, HAL.

AND ***THIS*** ISN'T MY REAL FACE EITHER.

HAL. YOU'LL HAVE TO ***HELP*** ME.

I'M RUNNING OUT OF ***HANDS.***

GO TO SLEEP, ROSE WALKER.

WIND UP THE DAY, LET IT GO.

"HELLO? ROSE? IT'S MOM. LISTEN, HONEY, UNITY'S HAD SOME KIND OF STROKE. SHE'S ALMOST NINETY. I CAN'T LEAVE HER. NOT NOW...

"NOT NOW...

"NOT NOW..."

PUT THE DAY AWAY IN ITS PLACE, ROSE. FORGET THE WEIRD THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS.

"I'M SORRY, MISS WALKER. HONESTLY, IT COULD GO EITHER WAY. ON ONE LEVEL, IT'S ASTOUNDING YOUR BROTHER IS STILL ALIVE. BUT THEN, HE'S YOUNG. GO HOME. WE'LL CALL YOU IF THERE'S ANY CHANGE...

"ANY CHANGE...

"ANY CHANGE..."

YOU DON'T NEED THEM.

FORGET THE BIG-BAD-WOLF-MAN WHO HURT YOU, AND WHO WANTED TO HURT YOU WORSE.

FORGET THE PALE STRANGER...

(WAS HE REALLY THERE AT ALL? WHEN YOU TRY TO REMEMBER HIM HE FADES AND SHIMMERS UNTIL HE SEEMS LITTLE MORE THAN THE ECHO OF A DREAM...)

YOU'RE TIRED, ROSE.

WRAP UP THE DAY.

SINKING, SLOWLY, DOWNWARD AND INWARD. ENTER A WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE JUST FINE.

UNITY WILL BE FINE.

JED WILL BE FINE.

YOU'RE SO TIRED...

JUST LET GO.

SHARP AND TUGGING: A BRIEF THOUGHT, AND YOU WONDER, ***WHERE'S GILBERT?***

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR ALMOST A WEEK, NOW. NOT SINCE THE TWO OF YOU GOT BACK TO FLORIDA WITH JED, HALF-STARVED AND DEHYDRATED AND SCABBED AND...

LET IT GO.

IT'LL STILL BE THERE TOMORROW.

(GILBERT?)

AND SLEEP.

AND DREAM...

GILBERT.

BREVARD COUNTY HOSPITAL

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HOOM.

So it begins, once more. The first vortex of this era.

Nonetheless, there is something about this one--this time--that I do not understand.

WROAARRKK?

TO BE HONEST, I STILL DON'T QUITE FOLLOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

WHAT IS THAT THING?

It is the vortex, Matthew. It is also Rose Walker.

And it is growing.

SO, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, CHIEF?

It means...

It means a number of things, Matthew. But they are not your concern at this time.
Your place is with the boy's mortal body. In the hospital. There is someone you must bring to me.

I DON'T LIKE HOSPITALS.

For my part, I must deal with this vortex, as I have dealt with the others in the past. As I must deal with anything that threatens the dreaming.

KEN DREAMS.

CummON BiG bOY . . .
Doo it 2M E$ . . .

Do IT!
DoN'T Doo it.

KENny. KENNY.

uH (!) yesSz.
uh. NO. UH. üh. . .

BARBIE DREAMS.

GRUNFF

This place makes me uneasy, Princess. If the Cuckoo's forces mean to attack us directly, they must do it before we reach the Brightly-Shining Sea.

I understand.

Caution, Princess Barbara.

I scent strangeness in the air.

What manner of thing, Martin Tenbones? The Cuckoo? The Heiromancer? Colonel Knowledge?

None of those. Something is happening, My Princess. Listen...

YuhGOTTa jUSDOiT
OhgOD oHmyGOD

CHANTAL DREAMS...

Not quite in nightmare, but far from comfortable, Chantal is held like a crashed computer in an infinitely regressing loop of story.

It was a dark and stormy night. And the skipper said to the mate, "Mate, tell me a story..."

And this was the story he told:

It was a dark and stormy night. And the skipper said to the mate, "Mate, tell me a story." And this is the story he told:

It was a dark and stormy night.--

skipper said--

Story, and this is the story he--

Dark and Stormy night--

And stormy--

night--

story--

ZELDA DREAMS.

ZELDA KNOWS CHANTAL WANTS HER TO TELL A STORY AND SHE SAYS--

In September of the Year 1911, a post-chaise drew up before the door of Aswarby Hall, in the heart of Lincolnshire.

Ding-Dong-D

The little boy who jumped out as soon as it had stopped looked around him with the keenest curiosity during the short interval--

--between the ringing of the bell and the opening of the hall door.

DING DONG DING

AND HAL SEES ROBERT AGAIN. NOT ROBERT AS HE PROVED HIMSELF TO BE-- CALLOW, SELF-CENTERED, DISHONEST...

...ASKED TO DESCRIBE THIS WHOLE BEAUTIFUL THING--

NO. THIS IS THE ROBERT HE HAD HOPED FOR. THE ROBERT HE HAD *DREAMED* OF. FRIENDLY, OPEN, *MAGICAL*...

...IF I WERE A BELL I'D GO DING DONG--

THEIR TUNE IS PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND.

DING DONG DING DONG DING.

ROSE DREAMS.

SHE *KNOWS* SHE'S DREAMING.

SHE'S NEVER HAD A DREAM LIKE THIS BEFORE.

EVERYTHING SEEMS *SO REAL, SO VIVID;* MORE TRUE AND MORE VITAL THAN THE WAKING WORLD.

HER SENSE OF IDENTITY HAS NEVER BEEN SO CERTAIN.

SHE CAN FEEL HER SLEEPING BODY ON THE BED BELOW HER.

IT'S NO PART OF HER; THE ESSENTIAL HER, THE TRUE ROSE.

FALTERINGLY, SHE EXTENDS HER PERCEPTIONS...

SHE CAN FEEL THEM.

CHANTAL, DREAMING INTRICATE, SELF-REFERENTIAL LOOPS, TRYING TO REVEAL NOTHING OF HERSELF TO HERSELF.

ZELDA, STILL FIGHTING OLD BATTLES, THE LITTLE GIRL LOST IN THE WOMAN WHOSE HEART SHE SHARES.

BARBARA'S RICH DREAM-LIFE, MORE VALID AND TRUE THAN ANYTHING SHE FEELS WHEN WAKING.

KEN'S CHURNING WORLD OF MONEY AND SEX AND POWER.

HAL'S ENDLESS QUEST FOR IDENTITY AND LOVE.

ALL OF THEM SEEKING A PLACE TO BELONG. ALL OF THEM SEEKING A PLACE TO BE SAFE.

AND SHE SEES HOW SIMPLE IT ALL IS.

SEES HOW THIN AND FRAGILE THE WALLS THAT DIVIDE THEM TRULY ARE.

SEES HOW SIMPLE IT WOULD BE TO SHATTER THEM.

SHE REACHES OUT HER MIND, AND NUDGES.

AND THE ***WALLS...***

BARBIE? IS THAT *YOU*? WHERE *ARE* WE?

Ken? How did you manage to get to the Place of Lost Carnadine?

THE *WHERE*? WHAT *IS* ALL THIS?

THE WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN.

Chantal? I'm **scared**! What's **happening** to us?

I THINK WE'RE DREAMING. I DON'T KNOW. I'M NOT SURE. IS *THAT* ROSE?

Over there? I **suppose**. It's so hard to **see**.

KEN? BARBIE? *HELLO*? CAN YOU *HEAR* ME?

AM I ASLEEP? AM I DREAMING?

ARE YOU?

AND BEYOND...

SHE CAN FEEL THEM: ACROSS THE CITY, A PARADE OF SLEEPING MINDS.

EACH MIND CREATES AND INHABITS ITS OWN WORLD; AND EACH WORLD IS BUT A TINY PART OF THAT TOTALITY THAT IS THE DREAMING... AND SHE CAN TOUCH THEM. TOUCH ***ALL*** OF THEM.

SHE BEGINS TO FREE THEM, LOOSING THEM INTO THE FLUX.

ACROSS THE CITY DREAMS BEGIN TO JOIN AND INTEGRATE AND, IN SO DOING, THEY CHANGE THE DREAMERS FOREVER.

Enough.

AND ROSE (STILL DREAMING, YET NEVER SO AWAKE) UNDERSTANDS, ELATED, THAT THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

THERE ARE SO MANY DREAMERS. ***SO MANY.***

Enough.

ROSE'S PERCEPTIONS EXTEND. SO MANY NEW THINGS.

THE BRUTAL, TOWERING DREAMS OF THE VERY YOUNG; THE FINE TRACERY OF LACE MEMORIES OF THE VERY OLD.

AND THE OTHERS. ***ALL*** THE OTHERS. AND IT WOULD BE SO ***SIMPLE*** TO CREATE ONE ***HUGE DREAM...***

ENOUGH!

UH...

WHAT HAPPENED?

You caused a great deal of damage. Nothing I cannot repair. Not at this stage, anyway.

I am the lord of this realm, Rose Walker. And I think the time has come for us to talk.

KEN WOKE, TROUBLED AND HORNY. HE PRESSED CLOSE TO BARBIE, WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT SHE WAS CRYING.

SHE COULDN'T TELL HIM WHAT SHE WAS CRYING ABOUT. SHE CLAIMED SHE DIDN'T KNOW.

HE SAID THINGS TO HER THEN, IN THE DARKNESS, THAT HE WOULD LATER REGRET.

CHANTAL AND ZELDA WOKE, SCARED AND LONELY.

THEY DIDN'T TALK. THEY HELD EACH OTHER IN THE DARKNESS, LIKE SISTERS, UNTIL THE DAWN.

HAL WOKE WITH A FEELING OF DREAD IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH. THROUGH THE THIN WALL HE COULD HEAR KEN'S VOICE, TOO LOW TO MAKE OUT ANY WORDS.

FOR A WHILE, HE SAT IN THE DARKENED ROOM.

AND THEN HE TOOK HIS FLASH-LIGHT AND WALKED, AS QUIETLY AS HE COULD, UP THE CREAKY WOODEN STAIRS.

ROSE? ROSE? ARE YOU AWAKE?

ROSE?

NO.

SHE WAS GONE.

AND SOMEHOW HAL WASN'T AT ALL SURPRISED.

MIRANDA?

IT'S OKAY. EVERYTHING'S OKAY.

I'M HERE.

4:30 A.M. MIRANDA WALKER HASN'T SLEPT FOR TWO DAYS, NOW.

THE DOLL'S HOUSE...

I THINK *ROSE* SHOULD HAVE THE DOLL'S HOUSE. BUT PERHAPS SHE'S TOO OLD FOR IT...

NO. NO, I THINK SHE'D LIKE THAT, MOTHER.

THAT'S *GOOD*. I WISH... I WISH MY ***PARENTS*** COULD BE HERE WITH ME. IT WOULDN'T BE *SO* HARD. I WOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF DYING, IF ***THEY*** WERE HERE...

BUT AT LEAST I HAVE YOU WITH ME, MIRANDA. AND *SO* LITTLE TIME REMAINING...

STAY ***WITH*** ME. IT MAKES THE LETTING GO EASIER TO BEAR...

AND THEN UNITY IS ASLEEP ONCE MORE.

AND MIRANDA THINKS *I DIDN'T NEED THAT.*

I'VE A SON WHO MAY BE DYING SIX THOUSAND MILES AWAY.

I'VE GOT A MOTHER WHO IS DYING HERE.

WHAT KIND OF AN OPTION IS THAT, THEN, GOD? --IF YOU'RE OUT THERE. IF ANYONE'S OUT THERE.

IT'S NEVER BEEN EASY...

SHE FEELS THE COLD OF THE GLASS AGAINST HER PALMS.

AND SHE THINKS, AT LEAST ROSE...

AT LEAST ROSE IS ALL RIGHT.

THIS--THIS IS ALL SO ***BIZARRE***. BUT IT'S JUST A DREAM, ISN'T IT?

After a fashion.

I'VE NEVER HAD A FLYING DREAM BEFORE. ***WHEE!***

SAY, WHOEVER YOU ARE. DO YOU KNOW WHAT ***FREUD*** SAID ABOUT DREAMS OF FLYING?

IT MEANS YOU'RE ***REALLY*** DREAMING ABOUT HAVING ***SEX***.

Indeed?

Tell me, then, what does it mean when you dream about having sex?

UH...

WHERE ARE WE ***GOING***?

We are already here.

It has begun.

BREVARD COUNTY HOSPITAL

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I DON'T KNOW WHY HE WANTED ME TO COME HERE, TO BE HONEST.

I DON'T EVEN THINK YOU CAN HEAR ME.

NO, I DOUBT THAT HE HEARS YOU. BUT I CAN.

I SUPPOSE I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, OR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

SOMEONE WHO WOULD COME FROM THE DREAMING TO TAKE ME HOME.

HI, KID. BRR. THIS PLACE REALLY GIVES ME THE, Y'KNOW, HEEBY-JEEBIES.

PERSONAL REASONS, FROM BACK BEFORE I WAS A RAVEN.

I IMAGINED THAT HE WOULD COME HIMSELF, THOUGH. OR SEND SOMEONE I KNEW.

I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU, LITTLE BIRD.

NO. I HAVEN'T BEEN DOING THIS FOR LONG. IT'S ALL KIND OF NEW. BUT I'M GETTING USED TO IT.

I THINK I LIKE BEING A *DREAM* BETTER THAN I LIKED BEING A *MAN*.

I DID SOME *ROTTEN* THINGS, NEAR THE END. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

LET'S JUST SAY I'M *GLAD* ALL *THAT* STUFF IS IN THE PAST. AND IN ANOTHER LIFE...

"BUT THAT WAS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, AND BESIDES, THE WENCH IS DEAD." I SEE.

SO, YOU WERE ONCE ALIVE, AND YOU HAVE BECOME A DREAM.

HOOM.

I WAS A DREAM ONCE. BUT I LEFT. AND TRUTH TO TELL, I WAS RATHER ENJOYING BEING ALIVE.

STILL, ALL GOOD THINGS...

I SHALL MISS LIFE. I FELT THAT I WAS GETTING QUITE GOOD AT IT.

AND I BELIEVE I SHALL MISS ROSE WALKER.

THE VORTEX?

ROSE IS A VORTEX?

OH. OH DEAR. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED...

YEAH. BUT IT'S OKAY. THE BOSS SAID THAT HE WAS GOING TO DEAL WITH HER.

HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN LOTS OF OTHER VORTICES IN THE PAST, AND HE'D DEALT WITH THEM AS WELL.

HOW DOES HE DO THAT?

HOW?

HE TERMINATES THEIR PHYSICAL EXISTENCE, LITTLE BIRD.

TO PROTECT THE DREAMING.

IT'S THE ONLY TIME HE IS EMPOWERED TO TAKE HUMAN LIFE, YOU SEE...

IT'S ONE OF THE RULES.

HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO KILL HER.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

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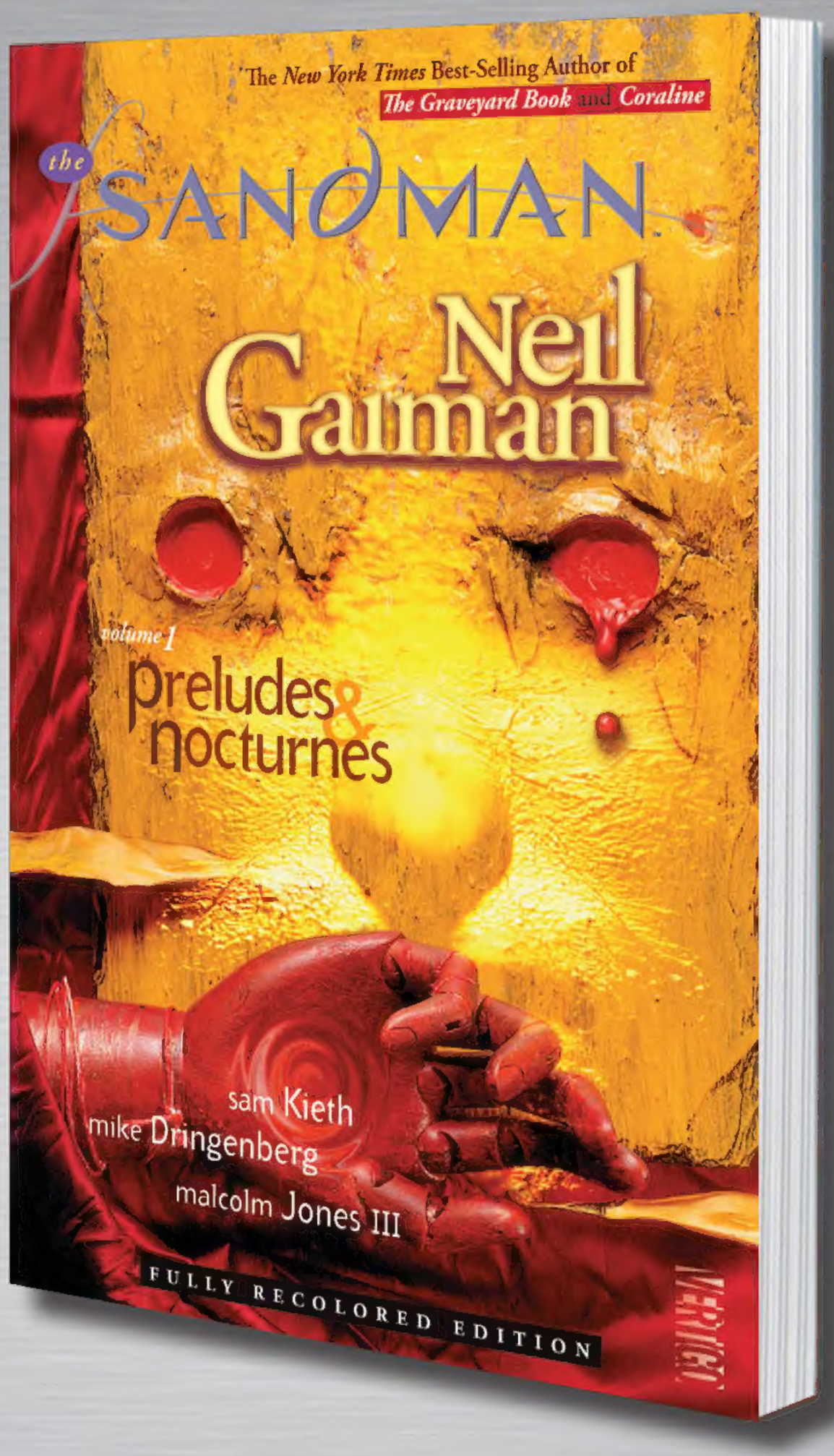
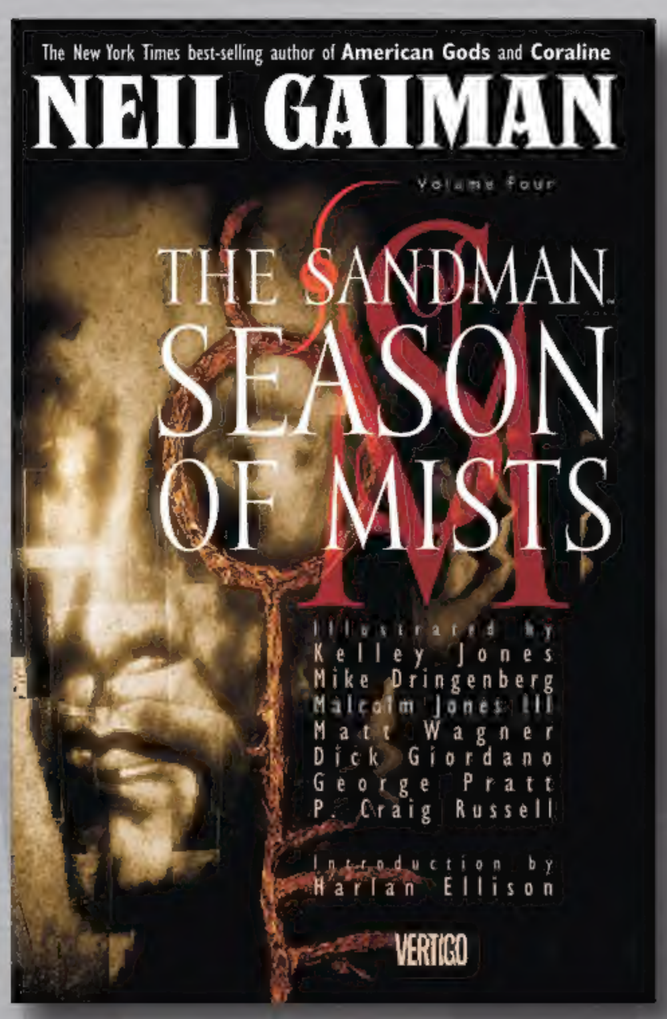


THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



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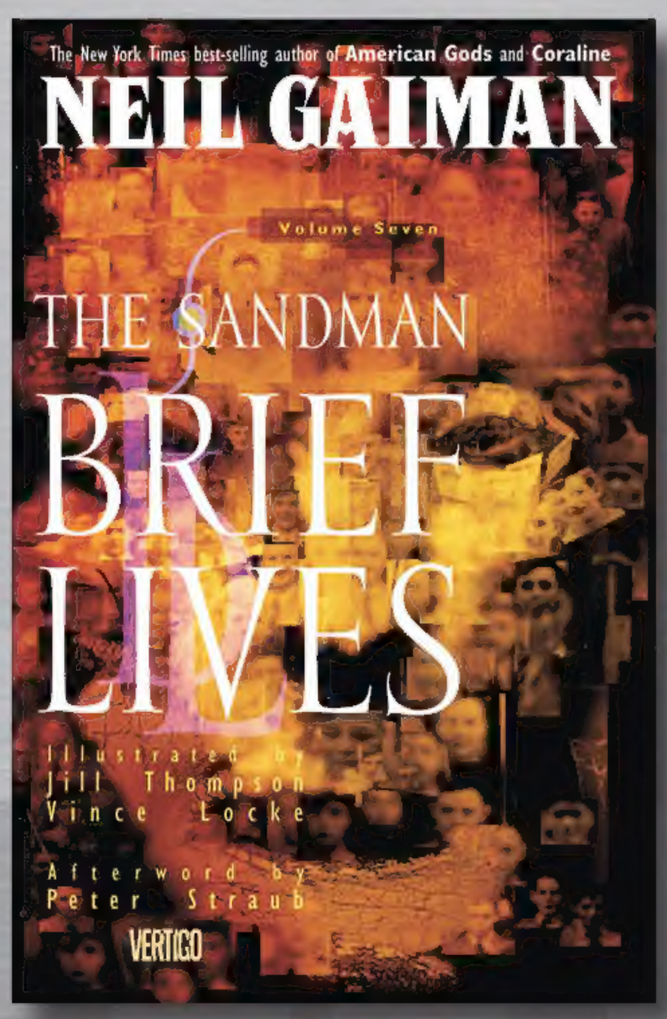

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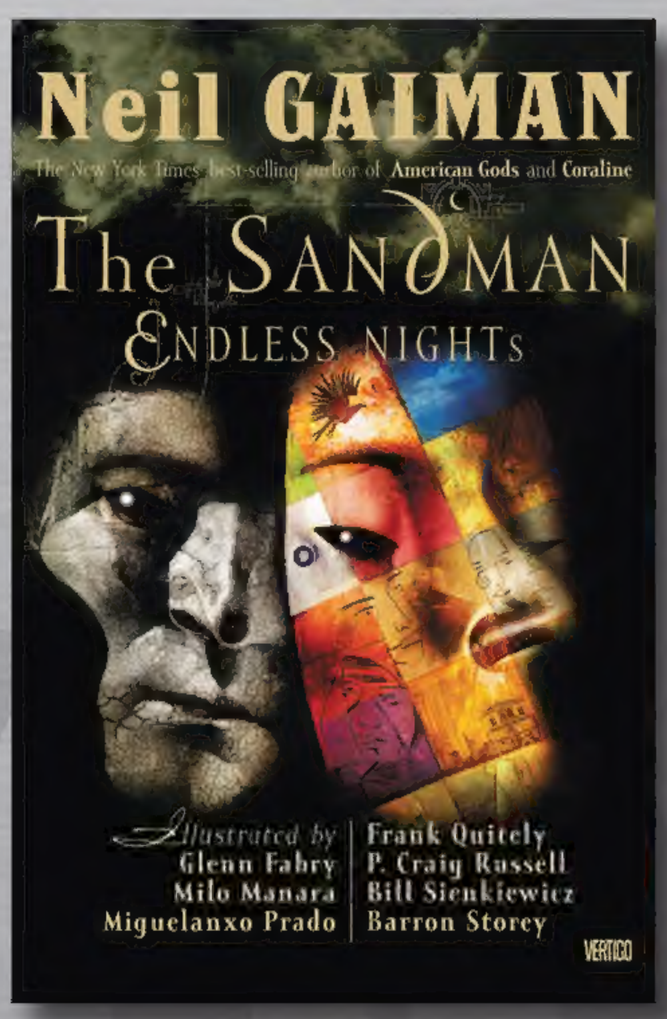
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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